A VISION OF GIORGIONE

BY

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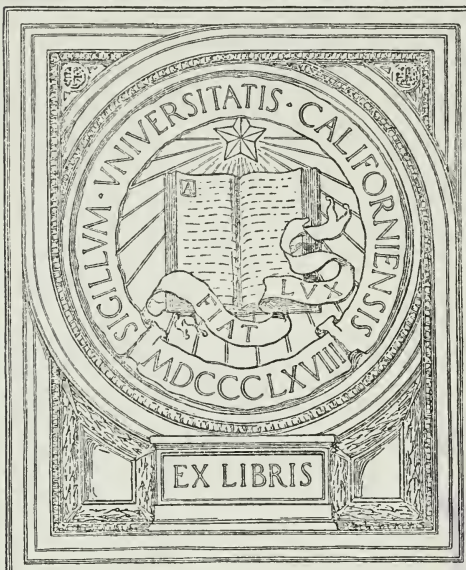

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THREE VARIATIONS ON VENETIAN
THEMES BY GORDON BOTTOMLEY

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TO MY WIFE

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ENGLISH

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Of the three following dramatic scenes, *A Pastoral of Giorgione* first appeared, under the title of *A Vision of Giorgione*, in the volume of poems *The Gate of Smaragdus* (London, Elkin Mathews, 1904), and was there followed by *Gemma's Song on the Way* and *The Lady of Giorgione*. They are reprinted from the original text without alteration.

A Concert of Giorgione and *Gemma's Song on the Water* have been added to the sequence more recently, and are here published for the first time, in completion of the original scheme.

G. B.

I

A CONCERT OF GIORGIONE

CHARACTERS

Giorgione
Paris
The Abate
Fra Umilio
Gemma
Ilaria
Cosa

I

A CONCERT OF GIORGIONE

GIORGIO BARBARELLI, *called* GIORGIONE, *had a clavichord in his studio (I, too, know a subtle painter who has a small ancient piano in his), to make music o' nights when the light had gone from Venice.*
This evening he and his pupil PARIS, *a boy, stood at the window.*

PARIS

THE sky's last rose falls into the water;
It sinks and melts and, melting, sinks once more.
The far bell tilts, and a stale star or two
Left over from last night blink like the bell.
A ceaseless fountain of flies is rising and falling —
They are as still as one more dimness falling
On the last water where my heart feels falling . . . . . .
O, falling, falling, till the world is done.

GIORGIONE

The work is finished; paint could but imitate it.
This is no vision to create anew
The painter's way; perfection comes but once,
And we must bring the mood for it ourselves.

Art is a piece of life for once transfigured
In its own light set free; a condition of rest.
There are two whispering girls down on the bridge,
Large-shawled, with a dark pulpy film of breath
Between their cheeks. . . . And there 's the wonderful girl
I saw one night play with a curling flower;
If I might make her lean upon a cushion
And listen to four strange pitiless words
I should feel the high and transitory hand
Whose right brush-strokes, passing, leave a soul,
I 'd enter paradise to repeat her mouth,
And leave her for a Fate on men for ever.
Set in rich greys; colour is sentiment
Some meritorious sunset-piece may ruin;
But in true tones the fadeless colour vibrates.

PARIS

She smiles to sweet Parise with the trailing hair,
A very fingered lady who shows thumb-marks
Where many men have skipped her pages.

GIORGIONE

So do the high unconscious Fates — we smile.

PARIS

Your gamba needs a string before they come.

GIORGIONE

And stroke the enamelled surface with old silk —
When I reach the high frets I must surmise

My fingers mirrored in its golden darkness
Ere touch will yield a breath-stirred down of sound;
For those charming repeated fingers seem
The thinner unchafed strings of sympathy
Stretched low in the Abate's viola d'amore.

THE ABATE

I 'll tune it soon in harp-way flat to-night,
To suit your imaged music with faint light.

[*They find that* The Abate *and* Fra Umilio *have entered unheard and are standing behind them.*]

GIORGIONE

Dear friends, you come as all music begins
In such inexplicable difference
As waking's unannounced moment reveals.

FRA UMILIO

What are these newest ladies on the easel?

GIORGIONE

I never know. I pose models no more,
But find adorable ladies with such fair minds
They may be trusted to express themselves
Graciously, perfectly in perfect gowns;
I ask them to come here quite half in secret
Wearing the gowns they think for quiet joy;
Sometimes I play them music of subtle discords

Or tell them casual fragmentary stories
About the sudden things women do
Which no man understands. And I watch.
I paint and watch; they think they are but broidering
Or wondering or resting from their fate.
This day I heard one humming on the stair
And knew she did not know her music's words
Though she felt something from the notes' new order;
Another turned sick; the singer ran to her,
A third one looked at me bewilderedly.
Let women move with their minds. . . . . Wait.
Then was my picture. Yet I do not know.

PARIS

Master, shall Fra Umilio hear the song
Before I set the clavichord for him,
The song you brought from the green music-house?

FRA UMILIO

Yes, sing, reveal to us your other thought
That caused the song to stir within you now.

PARIS

When I forget my lute (too large for me)
In its clear call that makes my touch unbodied,
It seems to heave and quiver to my breast
Until I hear blind depths past shape for knowing.
[*He sings.*]

Lady, when the moment passes
Will you smile or will you sigh?
Wine is high
In my slender amber glasses. . . . . .
If my mouth were in the masses
Of your heavy hiding hair
Would you know or would you care?
Would you cry
For the music that has gone
If my mouth were in your neck
Vibrant as a music-speck?
If my mouth were under your own
Would breath fly?
Taste, ah, taste this pallid amber
Past its heart that lights your chamber;
When your Moor may lute again
You 'll return and you 'll remember,
You 'll recapture what was pain
And remember and know why.

FRA UMILIO

So do these ladies in the water-light
Lean forward like regret yet glimmer away
Like memories we cannot understand,
The quiet hiding way of all flesh.
Does painting hurt you with unavailingness?

GIORGIONE

Living hurts with unavailingness,
Till painting seems a mirror of black glass
Where real life goes past me secretly.
See, our gold boy has floated a saffron dream
Inside the lid of the black clavichord.
Open the windows, Paris, and let live darkness
Deepen stillness with touches on our throats.
Light one far lamp, for that is music-light.

FRA UMILIO

My strings and Paris' voice and the slim viols
Slide through each other's folds, touch mutually
And straightway close in lambent mild surprise.
Some day, I think, these instruments will muse
To fuse voices no more, but flow alone;
And motets will be made for their thin sakes,
Wherein opposing voices will be found
Revealing slighted values of half known tones;
Till gamba and flute and clavichord together
Shall meet strange depths of larger motet shapes.

THE ABATE

We must have words, or else the shapeless chords
Are unrelated, vague, and answer nought;
Voices' thrill turns music into worship.
Nay, pipe and string must ever go beneath.

GIORGIONE

(Angelico shrank from Masaccio. . . . . .)

FRA UMILIO

I know there is a music gathering somewhere
Unmindful of the house where it is made,
And potent to feel more than men can say
In a minuter mode of sounds allied,
Without another art's cold explanation.

THE ABATE

Ah, but the voice is still an instrument
And must go with the rest to shape perfection.

FRA UMILIO

All meaning changes with the harmony.

PARIS [*sings*]

I saw her shadow on the curtain
Assailed by a breath of rain-wet roses;
And near her hair, but half as certain,
A shadow of tremulous love-in-a-mist
Seemed to leave her arm's slow poses
In a finger twist. . . . . . .
Listen, O, listen, listen
As if you were music listening to itself.
Even when I cease perfect voices remain.

[*Women's voices outside and far below sing.*]

Mouths together cannot speak?
Fie, a lie; dark breath meeting
Changes moulded by repeating
Lip and cheek. . . . . .

PARIS

There might be water over them or us
The way each long note follows itself so far.
They sing as if they feared they might not hear it.

GIORGIONE [*at the window*]

They are the deepest of the fig-tree shadow
Under the wall of the unknown woman's garden.
I see them by the light of their spread silks
Whose shapes make me restless and hopeless
As their sound would if we touched on a close stair.
They near: I hear the plash of a dipped hand.
O, they slip into starlight which will be
Like frost that cuts the scent in the last roses.
I see dim flowers melt in goldy silks
And knots of silk dropped over winy silks
And dimmer melting faces under silk hair —
I 'll add to them with a bowlful of loose roses
Which spread and fall all over bewildered as they —
O, one has dropt on the water whose topmost film
Ruffles it like low breeze, spreads it unbroken
And makes me poise and shiver with delight.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Who spills all kisses from such brimming lips?
O, petals creep in my bodice like tickling moths
That woke in a seam when old silk warmed to me.

GIORGIONE

They are past; they are a floating shadow again
That seems to show its own depths floating under.

PARIS

Had they a lute; or was it quite the water?
They might have taken me into their laps
And loved me because I am not a man:
But they are gone as though beneath full shawls
Perhaps to a hushed garden where only night
And each other's half caught breath will stir
Within their close neck-lawns while they listen.

GIORGIONE

When rarenesses like this open to me
By some supreme inexplicable hour
Women are the revealers and I know
Life is the apex of eternity:
God is the perfection of ourselves:
Divinity is the only immortality:
Evil is imperfection. Art is all,
Because it is the science of perfection.

PARIS

Like sounds of falling gloves feet touch the stair,
Near laughter like the sound of painted fans.

[*The door opens;* GIORGIONE'S *half sister* GEMMA *enters with her friend* ILARIA *and her maid* COSA.]

GEMMA

You never learnt to greet your sister so;
What exquisite would you make me, what sweet secret
Was I to carry and drop about my chamber?
I am some transfigured lady all at once,
Half mystery and half undreamed desire,
Going from my bed into rich dark romance
Wrapt in a Persian shawl of blue and rose
Over soft tussores that will never rustle
(They say she stole nuns' veils to make her night-gowns);
So I am briefly netted with floating mazes,
Seeming helpless perfection flowing past you.
O, sisters have not tresses full of petals
So soft and moist we wish they opened from us.
Is it a newish mode of inspiration
To greet my ivory lady I have brought you?
See, there 's a long stem in her comb; I 'll take it . . . .
Now I have spilt her gold down her shoulders,
Anointing her neck with a golden shadow of gold.
'Tis all your lovely sin. Girl, put it up.

GIORGIONE

Nay, let it stay. O, do not take that from me.
Lady, you and the darkness must be one,
Mingled like indistinguishable spices
To permeate me by your unknown instinct
And move me with right rituals to receive you.

ILARIA

They touched us with such homage of the night
That we felt immemorial and supreme —
Abstracts of every legend of the night.
I would have my hair bound up; I am strange and lost,
I am not mistress of myself or it
When it falls down me so . . . . . I have no poise.

GEMMA

I gave her torpid amber attar of roses
In a globed phial with a long small neck
To make her sweet for sinking music to-night;
She touched a drop upon her trembling finger . . . . . .
Sighed and waited, peeping down and shrinking;
She took the topaz stopper like a drop,
Luted it in its place with old ripe wax,
Then kissed the phial, watched the light inside
And said she was richer knowing it was attar
Than in confusing it with her old self.

GIORGIONE

You let my paintings take you from us too soon;
Madam, what are my women saying to you?

ILARIA

I think that every painter, even as God,
Developes men and women in his own image;
I look to find you — or your shape of soul.

PARIS

Let 's wonder what Luini's like, who paints
Such gauzy hesitant small-toed ladies as you.
He must be nearly as exquisite as you,
And that 's irreverence in any man.

GIORGIONE

He 's got a veil of Raphael in his soul,
And tries to think what he shall make his colour. . . . . .
Lady, will you not sit to receive our music?

GEMMA

We come to bid you leave your painted music
And go with us to-morrow to Castelfranco;
We shall be quite alone to feel June die
At feasts by the fountain, music under the trees.
Felice waits, and you shall bring Pietro —
Felice says all poems are dead within him,
Because he believes himself too trivial . . . . . .

But he remembers that the earth is cooling,
And there 's an end of immortality.
Our boat leaves for the Brenta before dawn,
While yet the old moon seems to air the water.

GIORGIONE

Yes, yes, I come. . . . . Madam, do you go too?

ILARIA

. . . . . Gemma says I must come.
Will other silk ones seek your music now?
I think I hear bewildering sounds growing. . . . . .

PARIS

I lay my head against your rustling bodice;
Lady, look down for whispers. . . . Your heart sounds
Like something coming. . . . . .
Did I whisper too loudly?

GIORGIONE

We must tune the violas again, again,
For stretching languors take them soon at night.
Lady, will you not walk in the far darkness
Moving among my ladies on the walls,
Who melt Good-night from you as you from us,
And let us watch you watching, while we play?

GEMMA

I cringe when tangled flies buzz in my hair.

GEMMA'S SONG ON THE WATER

PALE Ilaria, Beauty's daughter,
Does your face beneath the water,
Glimmering darkly up between us,
Hint to you another Venus
Shaping there
From throat to hair
Swirling in the water?
Lo, my hand dissolves in foaming
All the wonder that was coming,
Yet I nearly caught her.

Dark Ilaria, why this dreaming,
Rings and fingers dipt and streaming?
Does your heart hold some reflection
Of a dawning dim perfection,
Eyes that hide
Under a tide
'Wildering and streaming?
Eyes not yours, that make replying
Ever sinking, never dying?
Lean down to meet that gleaming.

II

A PASTORAL OF GIORGIONE

CHARACTERS

GIORGIONE
GEMMA
ILARIA
PIETRO
FELICE

II

A PASTORAL OF GIORGIONE

GIORGIONE, *his half sister* GEMMA, *her friend* ILARIA, GIORGIONE'S *pupil* PIETRO, *and* FELICE *a poet, are seated on the grass of a hillside at Castelfranco, in the shade of trees, and near a well.*

FELICE [*sings, to the sound of his own lute and* PIETRO'S *and of* ILARIA'S *flute*]

UINCE-BLOOMS that clamber
Lilacs among
Gathered for your chamber,
Spring-bloom and song.

You know, and none i' the world beside,
Of a song in the leafy night,
And a moon-girl slim at her lattice wide
Who leaned to her delight.

One burden had I, lulling lowly
To wake you yester-eve —
Flower and golden fruit come slowly,
Swiftly the golden leaf.

Wind-flower and crocus,
Jasmine and bay;
Death has bespoke us,
Love while 'tis May.

ILARIA

'Tis a sweet song, but sad i' the end, Felice.
Why do your fairest songs end mournfully?

FELICE

Because they sorrow that the end has come,
That they must cease, that ecstasy falls from them.
Who is not sad to know that song is ended?
The lute laid down murmurs regretfully
Till with a little dwindling sound of tears
The thrill sinks back on silence. Then, again,
I too am sad i' the end, am sad i' the end:
However rapturously I leap to joy,
However hopefully I turn to song,
I never reach my full imagination
Nor realise its close original glow;
And so my voice falls at a phrase's end
In a discouraged yet unwilling cadence —
Then say you song were sweeter lacking sadness.

GEMMA

Felice's songs are like the Umbrian saints
That grow in groves in the Perugian workshop;

Who, slim and sweet and pallid-raimented,
Before an evening sky and languid hills,
Droop gently in a modish melancholy,
And sadly smile, knowing how it becomes them
And stirs a tender rapture of compassion —
Those womanish men and less than womanish women
Can never stir the still deeps of devotion
That lie beyond all transient currents and winds
As do the tense-souled saints whom Giorgio painted
Serving the Virgin in our church set yonder.
Ah, Giorgio paints us saints no more, no more.
He has abandoned Gian's reverent ways,
Wherein we might have hailed him first ere now,
Only to picture pleasures for our eyes,
Feastings and concerts, lovers when they meet
With eager hands and faces whitely burning,
Felicities of colour keenly felt,
Things that we live through, live for every day,
Merely the passion and glory and glow of life,
Making our lives seem only Tuscan tales.
Sweet Giorgio, awake your inmost spirit;
Paint us the visions that beatify;
From the Perugian's helpless drowsiness
Save Christ and His dear Mother and Their saints.

ILARIA

Paint Judith sitting at Holofernes' feast,
Withdrawn into the shade, with hooded head,
Lest one should note that in her steady eyes

Which should upset the inveterate carouse
And thrust her forth upon their purposed road;
Thus — sitting, apart, at Holofernes' feast —
Like some black-marble sub-Memnonian queen
Piled on a hewn charred plinth of porphyry,
Immitigably based, with brooding face,
In the cold, dark, most utter court of hell,
Waiting her turn to march up and be damned —
While overhead peer from the scarce-seen walls
Assyrian fighters marbled in a row,
Big-bearded as their broad bull-bellied gods:
Or Judith standing by Holofernes' bed
While a wind shivering through the house fallen still
Sets waving a thin, uncertain, snaky lamp-flare;
Her mouth, affronted, flawed with wine-smear kisses,
Grown narrow and close-lipped, her chin stone-set;
Pausing a little — a last sharp, panting pause —
Before she leans across his dull-fumed breath
And grips his loose-lipped mouth in her rigorous hand
And digs for his soul.

GIORGIONE

Still must I paint the priests' way,
Nor go beyond their outworn knot of gods
And simpering saints who blandly cheat their godships
Of incense, offerings and adoration:
And if I win a respite from such saintings,
Fresh canonisings by my holy brush,
Still must I paint some sacred man or woman

Who died before dead saintship was the fashion,
And make them some amends for that they missed.
If I must limn a lady in blue robes
To strike the dominant among grey meadows
And sigh a cadence from her burning hair,
Why should I have no choice yet but Our Lady,
When I had liefer limn my lovely lady
And never need to call her Mary Virgin
To win the populace to look on her?
Did not the Paphian trail robes of bright water
And ripple her sapphire skirts a league away
In her Thalassian theophany;
And is she less a goddess than the other?
Or is she less worth splashing with costly colour?
If I would jewel a garden for the sake
Of cooling some white lady's flushed carnations
When she has slipped her vesture, faint with heat,
It is not needful that the rainbow riot
Which echoes from the lady's gleaming shoulder
Be outraged into an annunciation,
The girl austered into a pallid angel.
I need no feint of saints in conversation
If I would keep you feasters in the grass
For ever virginal, for ever sweet:
It were enough to show beneath the trees
Grave Gemma rilling kisses down the well
From the cold crystal misted by her lips;
To show her feet grey in the dim soft grass
As though they knew the asphodelian fields;
While with Orpharion and Angelot

Pietro and Felice tremble answers
To Ilaria's white light flute, as the still trees
Quiver a little to the air-pale water
That quivers into stillness far away.
If I would show an ecstasy of music,
Santa Cecilia's face has long been empty,
And Fra Umilio's would serve me better
When, with low tones and gliding modulations,
As brown will soften into mingling green,
He left his sober fugue to touch deep shadows
Into the background of young Paris' song
Whose trilling thrill was like spilt purling pearls.
I mean his song of ladies maying

. . . . . *When*
Will the sleepy roses waken
And slow dew each morn be shaken
From their shadowy hearts again.

Ah, in the end we never come quite near
Ripe music's rippling rounding into rest.
Never the subtlest interfused wan colours,
Where varying hues are fainting undistinguished
Like mulberries and cream upon the palate,
Can meet like notes that clasp for happy chancing
And die within each other's loosening arms.
Though sound and sense lapse into a plangent poem,
Flowing in rainbow-foaming syllables,
Yet music adds another, ne'er worded grace,
And godhead holds no mightier difference.

FELICE

Poets, art's women, have the last word still.
Music and painting reach the external senses;
The brush intrudes 'twixt vision and fulfilment;
The rarest voice is alien to the fall
Of primal notes i' the hushed musician's heart.
The poem keeps the picture's first emotion,
Nor leans on a sweet-voiced interpreter,
But yields in its original fecund silence
Its own sufficiency of mental music.
And when the springing thought assails the poet
It asks no aid of brush or strings or voice
To be translated into earthly forms,
But leaves his soul all naked to the word,
Which swift-continues the immediate rapture
With a still vibrant authenticity.

GEMMA

Poets, art's women?

FELICE

Ay: as poets touch
The closest to art's soul, so women dwell
Nearer the core of life habitually
(Perchance because life springs to light in them)
Than men do; and what men deem mystery
To them is clear, inexplicable truth.
Their bodily sense is quicker than men's thought

Thus, women are men's poets; a colourless girl,
Ripened by new short months of motherhood,
Passions of pain and happiness of tears,
Will utter, by some divinest divination,
Unconscious hints of things too far for me;
Till I turn faint with envying her sensations,
And pity myself I was not made a woman.

ILARIA

The surging shadows blend with trees and water
And pale to wavering mists o'er doubtful meadows;
Light lights come out in Queen Cornaro's tower;
And night the pessimist shuts her eyes on life.
Soon must we go away; before we go
Let Pietro sing that rime of ladies maying;
I never heard its arras-like name before.

GEMMA

It asks a lighter voice than tall Pietro's.
Come, let us rise; and as we loiter home,
Clustering together closely, hand in hand,
A company of shadowy presences
With fluttering gowns and lifted odorous hair,
Gowns hued like faded roses as though we walked
Under the light of some lost long-dead moon
Mid olives faint, uncertain grey and green;
I 'll sing of ladies maying long ago
In some low-lying madid luminous land,
If Pietro will but lend his lutany.

PIETRO

Most willingly, dear lady, to delight
The laughing lady of the laughing name.
Sing softly as the darkness: let us go.

GEMMA [*sings to* PIETRO'S *lute-playing*]

Ladies, dawn creeps down the valley;
Listen to the laughing girls
As a-maying forth they sally
Hid by orchard blossom-whirls.
Slowly swirls
All our vesture, starred with each bloom;
Come, the young breeze flings us peach-bloom
And our kiss-tossed tresses curls.

'Ware; Costanza seeks to pelt you
With the dripping may-bloom sprays;
Lo, the wind of petals dealt you
Hair and bosom overlays.
Days on days
Will the hedgerows wane and whiten
Flush and fade and throb and lighten
Down the white wet meadow-ways.

Liperata has a lover —
Leave her loitering shyly thus
Where the river-mists yet hover
And narcissus dimly blows.

Wait for us
Little lover, till, returning,
Bring we jonquils jewel-burning,
Shoots of golden cytisus.

Reap for garlands as we wander
Cerule-circling cyclamen;
Almonded with oleander
Soon we'll dance deep summer in.
When, ah, when
Will the sleepy roses waken
And slow dew each morn be shaken
From their shadowy hearts again.

GEMMA'S SONG ON THE WAY

HELEN dwelt in old Troy city
All to sow the sad brave ditty
Of the wearifullest pity
Men have ever wrought;
Yet her years were long and painless,
All her lovers left her gainless,
Smiles she gave and grey eyes rainless,
Right good was her lot.

In her dim blue woollen cloaking
Slipped she through the may-dew's soaking
Till her little hands fell knocking
Nigh the well-house stair;
In a hawthorn's light she pondered
While dark dew her gleam-feet laundered:
Paris knew not that she wandered,
So he did not care.

Helen was the dearest lady,
Woodbined with deep tresses shady,
Eyes a-calling, arms a-ready,
Ever stirred men's verse;
Yet the highest king to-day
Liefer with my hands would play
And his mouth to mine would lay
Liefer than to hers.

III

THE LADY OF GIORGIONE

CHARACTERS

GIORGIONE

ILARIA

GEMMA

III

THE LADY OF GIORGIONE

GIORGIONE *and* ILARIA, *whose companions have returned long before, enter the garden of the villa Barbarelli at Castelfranco. The darkness is ever deepening, and* GIORGIONE *is utterly invisible, but for a little while* ILARIA'S *pale gown flickers doubtfully; then this also disappears in the final night.*

GIORGIONE

THIS is the garden; I hear far water spilling
Into the weedy marble's green-dark pool:
Late lilacs heavy o'er the yew-gloomed terrace
Feel sweet to drop unconscious on our breasts:
You tread the wandering bergamot to scent.
"Still; still; all 's still" the water sounds to sigh.
The night upcurls and shuts us in its heart
As the soft petals of a night-folding flower
Press closer two bewildered butterflies.
I cannot see you; touch my hand and take it;
Come, 'tis a cluster rose that wets our faces,
Beaten over the path by last night's rain.
Ah, now we break some new-flung dewy cobweb. . . . .

ILARIA

It is so late; we have been somewhat lost;
I move unsensed amid the night's tired odours;
Perchance the others think we are before them —
I see no lights. The morrow may bring jests,
But none to touch us. . . . . .

GIORGIONE

No? . . . . . .

ILARIA

I do not know. . . . . .
I share your lay of ladies maying now —
Teach me yet one more song to bear to rest,
To sway with in the haze 'tween sleep and waking,
A bird at dawn upon a misty pine.
But—nay . . . . . for when I hear your pain-deep voice
I stand with lidded eyes and think no more
Until you cease — I will not thus forget you. . . . . .

GIORGIONE

My mother was a peasant in Vedelago
And there I went among the vines in bloom
(The vines in bloom — it has a happy sound)
And hid among the vines at fruiting time.
There, when I watched my mother trampling grapes,
Holding her faded skirt about her thighs,

I heard her sing a rime the priest had made
While busy in his vines one pruning time.

ILARIA

Nay, sing then; sing; sing quickly that I may go;
I hear one stirring somewhere in the night.

GIORGIONE [*sings*]

Yellow leaves and blue-bloomed bunches
Merge with heat on many hills;
Haste — ere one grape-treader plunges
Down the press whence purple spills
We must strip the weary vines,
Load our frails of shoots of pines —
Dark-mouthed Nonna 'tis who munches
Thirst-fruit ere the dim sun shines.

Ah, the golden clusters yonder
In the lowliest vineyard
Where slow streams go lapping under
Clovered meadow-sweeted sward:
'Tis our subtle grape to clear
All the grossness of the year,
Many a wine to touch with wonder
From its incense-fragrance rare.

O, the foaming of the presses
In the must-house dark and cool;
Foam our olive feet caresses
Sinking down the spirting pool.

Flushed youths from the sun-filled door
Knee-deep pile our pulpy store —
Zanze, knot your honey-tresses,
Down the vat they drip and pour.

On the wall brown figs are drying;
Choose the burst ones; fill a frail:
Nigh the soft brown bread are lying
New-drawn must and hydromel.
Leave the vintage sickly sweet,
Twilit earth mists forth day's heat,
Hiding us in its white sighing —
Men and maidens, come and eat.

GEMMA'S *Voice is heard from her chamber-balcony overhead*

So, Giorgio, you have come. 'Tis very late:
We thought you would not thank us if we tarried,
We knew you would not answer if we called;
Consider then that maidens loverless
Wonder no more what colour fills your thoughts;
Nay, some would rather sleep than hear your raptures;
Your lady's perfume has not yet left your raiment —
She cannot be abed even now — consider
That love needs rest the more, reaching the heights;
You will be closer to her in her thoughts
Than in your over-conscious serenading;
The flowerlings on an over-blossomed tree
Cannot all knit for fruit — even on life's tree.

GIORGIONE

How can I have a lady who knows it not?

GEMMA

Enough, you love her . . . . . .

GIORGIONE

I never said I loved her . . . . . .

GEMMA

But when you spanned her with the painter's eye
Your glance lingered, you leaned to touch her shoulder,
You answered a laughing thought I never uttered
As though I spoke . . . . .

GIORGIONE

No more, dear disputant.
I love her, and I love her, and I love her —
But will this dear thing thank you for such a lover?

GEMMA

O, she would thank you for your wilful sister
Who hints the thing she dare not speak, I vow;
For I have heard her use your cadenced phrases
And then she stopped and flushed and altered them;
And once she said she wished that we were sisters. . . .

GIORGIONE

She is the truest figure of a lover
That God could think of in His lover's soul;
There 's midnight's Adriatic in her eyes,
I 'll put its heaving passion in her heart;
As Venice blushes from its sunrise sea
So shall she spire and pearl it up from me;
Hush, ere we flash her name across the night
And disappoint the hills with hopes of dawn . . . . .

[*During his words* ILARIA *gradually nestles against him, and slowly slides her arm over his shoulders.*]

Why, even as I speak I feel about me
That which assures me how I love and brings
A silent answer warm as my love's love . . . . . .

GEMMA

Men never learn their minds but by a woman;
You owe me some devotion for my teasing.

GIORGIONE

Thanks, thanks, all thanks, O hidden with the stars:
I thank you for the boons you think you bring me,
But most of all for that you know not of.
But go, ah, go, I think you shivered then —
Go, go, your night-gear is too thin to shield you;
O, go, your kind words keep me from my joy
That crowds the waiting silence — O, good night. . . . . .

[GEMMA *withdraws laughingly, letting a curtain fall behind her:* GIORGIONE *and* ILARIA *blend into each other's arms, and are silent for a long time.*]

GIORGIONE

Forgive me, sweet; I could not speak before;
As a great organ-pipe too deep to sound
Shakes heavily the dim oppressive air,
My heart-beats were so close, so close and thick,
No word could fall between them. . . . . O, my breath
Thrusts on too eagerly to let me live,
Sobs and catches and rushes and stops, as though
A mad bird beat its wings upon my breast . . . . . .
I cannot reach the thing that I would say,
For I would say . . . . . Ilaria, kiss; you know.

ILARIA

I never thought love was so sharp and stinging,
So rigid and austere and dark a thing.
Ever I dreamed it was a lovely crown,
The justifier of dignity and pride,
Gracious to touch a woman's gracious ways
With light, and magnify them to perfection.
And now it comes annihilating all,
Trampling on all and stripping me of all,
Making all inconceivable and strange,
Humiliating me and flinging me
Naked and swooning down an unknown night.

O, lover in the darkness, art thou nigh?
Loose me and let me go . . . . . loose me, I tell thee!
Now draw me close again . . . . . fiercer than that . . . .
Harder, harder, until you hurt my breasts;
Think you are cruel to one who tried to stab you . . . .
I was so numb with your continual pressure
I could no longer feel you, nay, nor know you,
And so I needs must be unloosed that once
That I might swell to your embrace again,
Lest I should feel alone in stringent darkness.
And now I will deliberately that love
Be stern and humbling to me, for 'tis thus
That I may sound my blissful heights and deeps:
I will not have you chivalrous to humour
The fanciful airs of a darling of artifice:
Probe till I wince; thus only may you learn
Where I am tender to your mordant charm:
I pray you bring no reverence and adoring,
But master me — if need be, with dear pain —
For I should grow so vain of your subjection
That I should think myself too great to love you.

GIORGIONE

Wonderful love, and wonderful again,
Like a thrilled night too wild to hold a moon
You would deny your loveliness its right
And be unjust to its fine source, your soul . . . . . .

ILARIA

I would I had been peasant-born, to feel
The must and slippery grape-skins on my feet —
Nay, even to stumble and strain yoked to the plough,
Galled on my sun-charred and wind-roughened shoulders
By harness for which oxen were too dear.
My delicate nurture spurs your dainty thoughts;
Catch at the woman — I will not be your lady.

GIORGIONE

'Tis past your choice; how can you make the lily
Not grow a golden heart, a golden heart?
We have no time to wrangle how to love,
We have no time for anything but love,
No time, no time, for all men die too soon.
Sweet, sweet, and sweet, life is one poignant kiss
Earth gives to each man's spirit as it passes
From unknown places to unaccustomed light:
Sweet, sweet, and sweet, I bid you take life's counsel;
Your brow or side-turned cheek you would not offer —
Life says "the mouth;" abandon then your mouth.
For if we kiss, we kiss, whoever dies,
And if we love, we love, whate'er the way . . . . . .
See, Gemma's curtain waves before a lamp —
I would not she should know you heard her speak,
'Twould wreck the subtlest secret in the world;
So we must go. I think it must be midnight:
The doves are silent in the cypresses;

The fountain sounds so sleepy in the dark;
My feet are wet, standing in dewy flowers;
Long since the wind swooned when it reached your hair.
It is so dark you cannot find your way —
Come, I must put my arm about your neck
To guide you — surely, I cannot help but kiss you
Feeling your cheek so warm against my shoulder —
O, will you take me with you in your dreams
To cheat the unpitying night that smiles to part us?
Think but of me, the sunrise will be swift,
And yet it will not be so swift as I:
I will await you here. Dear heart, good night.

ILARIA

O, beautiful; O, beautiful; too late!

GIORGIONE

Is it the splendid love-years we have missed?

ILARIA

Nay, I am glad I cannot have my way.

GIORGIONE

Is that your mood? Then take it evermore.

ILARIA

I bade you master me; and so you do.
Hold me an instant longer; lead me farther —

I have forgot the way that I must go.
I would you knew it not. Why must I go?
Wilt spoil me of my priceless necklace too?
I am all yours, so keep me from myself
Who cannot praise as I would hear you praised.
Nay, I must sleep, to calm my kindled face
Ere you can see it . . . . . Ah, good night, good night.

GIORGIONE

And have I lit your face with fainting words?
'Tis hard I may not see the glance I rouse
(Thus we know not our words' effect in heaven),
Pure beauty surely, rarer than all your past —
The jewel ne'er was flashed that way before.
Yet go and dream, that you may hold it there
In trust for me until, with the new morrow,
I dawn into my kingdom. Queen, good night.

[ILARIA *enters the house swiftly, but* GIORGIONE *lingeringly turns down the garden once more; his voice is heard until he is far down an unseen avenue.*]

I longed to bring you flowers in May-time,
But all the rose-buds were unblown;
I throbbed to see you through the day-time,
But not till night-fall dared I near you
Lest you should learn that one could fear you,
Gift I had none —
For you a rose, a rose alone.

But June has wrought its old fulfilling,
My heart is all a burning rose;
And yet the night-fall vague and stilling
Brings me to you as hushed and often
My wonder's whirling glow to soften,
For no one knows
What hides in its dim blue repose.

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